

## *What you should know about barbecue maintenance and safety.*

Holding a barbecue should be a safe and fun experience for everyone. It is very important to keep children away from any area near hot charcoals or open flames. When barbecuing, everyone present should help to keep an eye on toddlers and young children to keep them safe from burn injuries. To prevent injuries or damage to property, please take the following precautions:

### **1 Maintenance and Safety First**

- Ensure that your barbecue is sound and in good working order.
- Make sure the cooking site for the barbecue is flat and is away from sheds, fences, and overhanging branches.
- Position the grill well away from siding, deck railings and out from under eaves.
- Never use a barbecue indoors or in tents. This is a dangerous fire hazard and can cause high levels of carbon monoxide.
- Keep children and outdoor games away from the cooking area. Never leave a barbecue unattended.
- Light barbecues with a long match or mechanical lighter designed for lighting barbecues. Keep all matches, lighters and barbecue lighters out of the reach of children.
- Use long-handled grilling tools to give the chef plenty of clearance from heat and flames while cooking.
- Allow the barbecue to cool before attempting to move it.

### **2 Charcoal Briquette Barbecues**

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Use only sufficient charcoal to cover the base of the barbecue to a depth of about 2 inches (5.0mm). Store extra charcoal in a metal container with a tight-fitted lid to keep it dry. Wet charcoal can spontaneously combust and start a fire.
- Use only recognized charcoal starter fluid. Use lighter fluid on **cold** coals only and use the minimum quantity necessary to start the charcoals. Adding fluid to burning or hot coals can cause the entire fluid container to flash into fire and cause serious burn injuries.
- When removing the ashes from the barbecue, make sure they are cool or put them into a non-flammable container such as a metal bucket. Water may be added to the cool ashes, remembering to stay back, away from potential hot steam. Empty spent ashes onto bare garden soil—do not put ashes into a garbage can or paper bag. House fires have been caused by hot ashes which later ignited when left on a deck or porch.

### **3 Gas Barbecues**

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions and have the grill or cylinders repaired by a trained professional. To check the gas cylinder or pipe for leaks, brush soapy water around all joints and watch for bubbles. If you find a leaky joint, try to tighten, but do not over tighten. If ever in doubt about the integrity of your gas cylinder, have it tested. Never use gas cylinders that are past their legal use date.
- Open the barbecue lid before turning on the gas to light.
- When you have finished cooking with a gas barbecue, turn off the gas cylinder before the barbecue controls. This ensures that any residue gas in the pipeline is used up. Double check to make sure the tap is turned off before changing the gas cylinder. Change gas cylinders in the open air, not in a confined space.

- Do not keep more spare gas cylinders than you need. Store gas cylinders outside, away from structures (protected from frost and direct sunlight). Do not store gas cylinders or barbecues with gas cylinders on them beneath the eaves of your home or under the stairs of your home. If you are upstairs, this is your means of escape from a fire.
- When transporting your tank, transport in the upright position, keep a window open to ventilate. Make sure your tank is equipped with a safety plug. Never leave a tank in a closed compartment. Never smoke during refilling, reconnecting or transporting.
- All propane cylinders manufactured after April 2002 must have over fill protection devices (OPD). OPDs shut off the flow of propane before capacity is reached, limiting the potential for release of propane gas if the cylinder heats up. OPDs are easily identified by their triangular-shaped hand wheel.

**Reference:** NFPA Fact Sheet, Grilling, updated April, 2004

<http://www.nfpa.org/Research/NFPAFactSheets/Grilling/grilling.asp>